

VZCZCXYZ0015  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUJA #1633 2110657  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 300657Z JUL 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0447  
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 7520

UNCLAS ABUJA 001633

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TBIO](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: FETE FOR THE FRIST LADY OF NIGERIA

¶1. Summary. On July 26 Nigerians celebrated the 50th birthday of First Lady Hajiya Turai Yar'Adua with a gala banquet at the State House for 1,000 guests. Although the event focused on Madame Yar'Adua and underlined that she will be a force to reckon with in years to come, the party also provided the opportunity for the new administration's first real celebration of itself as it coincided with the naming of the new cabinet. There was much glad-handing and joy in the banquet hall that conveyed an intended sense of legitimacy for the continuity of government. End Summary.

¶2. The gala was obviously a well pre-planned event designed to fete, introduce and thrust Madame Yar'Adua into the limelight. That task was well accomplished with reminiscences via video by her elderly father, and remembrances by school mates and colleagues. A clear demonstration of attachment to family values, it was an occasion for the first family, daughters and son, also to bask in the affection of the nation's political elite. Even though admonished by her father never to change, Madame Turai has, indeed, moved far beyond her rural roots.

¶3. The official bio, distributed to the guests, follows: "Hajiya Turai Umaru Yar'Adua was born July 26, 1957 to the family of Alkali Abdullahi Maimaje in Katsina metropolis, and the importance of education was instilled in Hajiya Turai from an early age. Her primary education started at Garama Primary School and was completed at Girls Day School, both schools respectively in Katsina. After completing primary school, Hajiya Turai was granted admission to the Government Girls Secondary School, Kankiya. Eighteen days after completing secondary school, Hajiya Turai married President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, and he encouraged her to attend Katsina College of Arts, Science and Technology (KCAST). Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) was the next milestone in Hajiya Turai's educational experience where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree with Honors in Hausa. Throughout her education Hajiya Turai distinguished herself through hard work and commitment to excellence.

The Government Day Secondary School, Funtua, was the recipient of Hajiya Turai's work ethic as she began her professional career with a one-year National Youth Service. Upon completing her youth service, the Katsina State Ministry of Education extended a teaching appointment to Hajiya Turai, and she taught at various secondary schools across the state. During this appointment, Hajiya Turai rose to the position of Head of Languages at Government Day Secondary School (GDSS), Kofat Yandaha until she decided to retire.

Even in retirement, Hajiya Turai was not tired as she engaged herself in numerous public service activities. Providing humanitarian welfare and services to the needy and less privileged has been especially important to Hajiya Turai. As the First Lady of Katsina State, she helped children born with abnormalities receive surgeries abroad. Scholarships and instructional materials were granted to poor pupils and primary schools across the state. She facilitated the provision of the Women's Inter-city Bus Service in Katsina and provided hundreds of tricycles to the disabled. Hajiya Turai reconstructed and equipped a workshop for male inmates and a female cell to help decongest the Katsina Central Prison. She continually provided assistance to womens' skills acquisition centers in the

state to nurture women's self-reliance.

Many organizations have honored Hajiya Turai for her contributions to social development. The Katsina State Council of Chiefs awarded her for selfless service to humanity, the World Islamic Call Society (Libya) Award for Excellence was received for her contribution to the growth of Islam in Nigeria, Arewa Youth Forum Award of Excellence, Nigeria Union of Journalists, Katsina Chapter Award of Honor by the Federated International Youth, the Sport Medal of Excellence and the NYSC/Road Safety Award of Excellence are only a few of the many achievements awarded to Hajiya Turai.

As a pillar of support to her husband, the President, and her family of seven children, Hajiya Turai Umaru Yar'Adua is a devoted Muslim who cares for family and community."

¶4. Comment. Little in Nigeria is modest and this sumptuous party was no exception. On that score it indicated that as President, Yar'Adua will not project as austere an image as that he held as Governor of Katsina State, but will rather be more in the mold of his predecessors. The President himself did not speak, but contentedly presided over the head table. The party did bear a new stamp indicating a clear change of administrations. It fortuitously marked the swearing in of the cabinet, which occurred that morning, and the real beginning of Yar'Adua's government. End Comment.  
GRIBBIN